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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an overview of the Sales Techniques and Results (STAR) training program developed by the National Alliance of Business in conjunction with IBM. The STAR training program can be used to help vocational directors, teachers, and counselors to be better salespersons for cooperative education or job placement programs. The paper describes 11 basic assumptions on which STAR is based. These ideas are described under the following headings: (1) people who help other people obtain jobs are sales representatives; (2) the customer-oriented selling approach; (3) focusing on the customer; (4) call phases; (5) communication skills; (6) three kinds of customer obstacles; (7) true concerns versus requests for information; (8) the social styles approach; (9) think, feel, behave; (10) "cross" foil (social styles); and (11) assumptions about versatility. The paper concludes with a 10-question true/false test about STAR, with answers and explanations provided. (KC)

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National Alliance of Business

Sales Techniques and Results

STAR

American Vocational Association
Cooperative Work Experience Section
Las Vegas, Nevada

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NAB Clearinghouse

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December 1987

STAR OVERVIEW

Steven J. Golightly
Director
National Alliance of Business Clearinghouse

Introduction

We are going to take some time today to talk about success in the area of job placement for vocational education programs. As you know, the Carl D. Perkins Act of 1984 calls on vocational education programs across the United States to build stronger relationships with businesses. In essence, the law calls on vocational educators to give more citizens access to high-quality, relevant skills training that will prepare them for career-oriented jobs. Successful placement of trainees in jobs is particularly important to this effort because after business people hire successful vocational education graduates, they are motivated to build strong partnerships with local programs.

At the National Alliance of Business, we refer to the process of finding jobs for training graduates as "job development." The people from training programs who visit employers and try to persuade them to hire graduates are called "job developers." While we know that the people who develop jobs in the vocational education system often have different titles -- like work-study coordinators or vocational coordinators -- the work they do is virtually the same as the work done by job developers in the JTPA, vocational rehabilitation and other skill training systems. Specifically they visit employers, discuss their hiring or training needs and talk about the programs they represent. If the employer agrees, they identify appropriate applicants and send them over to interview. Then, if all goes well, the applicants are hired.

During NAB's 20 years of experience in employment and training, we have studied the issue of job development in great depth. We have learned that there are two main keys to success. The first is business involvement in programs and the second one is personal selling. Personal selling is by far the most effective technique available for letting businesses know about program participants and convincing employers to hire them.

Research has shown that sales success among private sector salespeople is not linked to age, sex or even years of experience. What really makes the difference between the salespeople who succeed and those who fail, is possession of skills that can be learned and used in any setting -- including to help the unemployed get and keep jobs.

With this in mind, we went across the country and asked people who provide all kinds employment services (including vocational educators) what they needed and wanted in a sales training course and then we went to the premier salespeople in the country - IBM - to get it.

The product of our joint venture with IBM is a state-of-the-art sales training program called Sales Techniques and Results (**STAR**) -- designed for folks like you. The IBM approach has been used to successfully train over 10,000 salespeople

during the last 15 years. Needless to say, they believe in it...but they also believe something else... good salespeople are *made* not born!

I am going to take the next little while to give you an overview of STAR . As you have probably guessed, we at NAB, think that **STAR** will help you to help your students better, assist you in obtaining better placements for your graduates and in the long run allow you to exceed your job placement goals.

Sales Techniques and Results (STAR) is based on the idea that:

OH # 1 People who help other people obtain jobs are sales representatives

"Sales" creates many different images (most of us think of the poor image of a used car salesman) -- for now you will need to put those images on "hold"

Instead consider:

Sales Management magazine conducted a survey for Fortune 500 companies and found that 92% of the corporate executives interviewed said, "We prefer salespeople who do not look, talk, or act like salesmen."

With this in mind, the STAR course teaches participants a strategy called the Customer Oriented Selling Approach

OH # 2 The Customer Oriented Selling Approach

There are two major concepts involved in customer oriented selling

Customer oriented selling is a process that focuses on the customer, rather than on your services

It is a logical step by step procedure for planning and conducting sales calls

The key point here is to begin "thinking customer."

OH # 3 Focusing on the Customer

In customer oriented selling, the key is to find out what the customer wants and then to show how your services can help achieve it--fit the services to the customer not the other way around

It is important to note that productive sales calls do not just happen -- they begin long before you meet the customer. They start with pre-call planning.

In the pre-call planning process, you begin orienting your selling to the customer you are trying to serve. You do this is by assessing what you already know about the customer, determining what you think the customer is trying to achieve and then identifying specifically how your services can help the customer meet his or her goals.

The STAR Process

The four phases of the **STAR** customer oriented selling approach helps you to understand and know exactly where you are at every point in a sales call. In this way, you know when to move on to the next phase by constructing a series of agreements

OH # 4 Call Phases

Phase One involves explaining who you are and why you are there. Introducing yourself may sound obvious but it is surprising how often sales representatives forget to do this. In this phase, you ask some conversational questions and then begin introducing some pre-selected topics (from your pre-call planning efforts).

Phase Two allows you to qualify customers by finding out more about their individual situation.

It is crucial to have customers define and clarify their objectives and situational factors. The customer's objectives are the things a customer wants to achieve. The sales process actually begins when the customer indicates a desire to discuss objectives in his or her area of responsibility. In STAR, you develop information with a customer rather than collect information from a customer.

Phase Three is where you will recomend a customer action that will help the customer achieve his or her objectives. You will propose a customer action, explain how the customer's objectives are achieved by taking this action and then verify the proposed customer action in order to construct the agreement.

Phase Four involves obtaining customer commitment. Many people hesitate to ask for commitment because they are afraid of being told "no". However, if the customer has made all of the preliminary agreements that have led up to the final big one, then your asking will come as no surprise to the customer. In helping the customer determine his objectives, you have actually provided a service to him. Through this service, you have earned the right to ask for a commitment.

OH # 5 Communication Skills

Customer oriented selling depends on effective communication with your customers, which in turn depends on your mastery of the following essential skills:

Listening and Observing - the process of taking in information from the customer and organizing it so that you can use it intelligently in your sales effort. This involves listening to the meaning of what is said by the customer, not just the words, and watching "body language."

example: noticing the 'real' message from the customer who keeps saying "I agree," but has his arms crossed in front of his chest.

Questioning - the process of using a series of logically related questions to obtain the information you need systematically

example: using general questions like "what are your plans for the future?" in the beginning and following them with more specific

questions like "how do you plan to train new employees?" in order to get a clear sense of the employer's situation.

Verifying - the process of confirming the information exchanged between you and the customer and determining whether or not the customer is really agreeing with you.

example: summarizing or restating what the employer has said with a statement like "so your are looking for new employees who can type 40 words per minute?" Then confirming that what you have said is correct by saying "is that right?"

Explaining - the process of giving the customer information efficiently, logically and convincingly

example: offering the employer a suggested action like "you could get the ten trained workers you need from the PIC's training program within two weeks at no cost to you, by calling our referral service."

Good communication skills are essential during all phases of the STAR customer oriented sales call. You need to start with a general topic area and then using a "funnel approach," question and verify again and again until you have enough objectives and related situational factors to make a recommendation to the customer.

The key here is to move from the general to the specific - always getting closer to exactly what the customer wants to achieve.

OH # 6 Three Kinds of Customer Obstacles

A customer is raising an obstacle when he or she expresses doubt about or objects to something that could prevent you from successfully constructing an agreement.

Obstacles must be handled immediately. Only after you have responded to the obstacles and dealt with them successfully will you be able to get the sales call back on track to complete the construction of the agreement.

Often raising obstacles means the customer is really interested. If you can overcome the obstacle and deal with it, the customer will buy.

There are basically three kinds of obstacles: customer disinterest, customer inability and customer concern.

- Disinterest - A customer shows disinterest by indicating that he or she is not really interested in taking proposed customer action.

  For example: "I agree that your recommendation makes sense, but it is just not that important to us at this time."

- Inability - The customer shows inability by expressing that he or she cannot take the action you proposed.

For example: "I'd love to do it, but I can't make the decision without checking with Mr. Miller."

- Concern - The customer raises a concern by expressing that he or she dislikes or misunderstands something about the customer action you propose.

  For example: "I don't want a lot of those "welfare" types coming in here."

Whether the obstacle is customer disinterest, customer inability or customer concern, the customer is really saying " stop, I have a problem with this". If you are going to construct an agreement, you will need to put the obstacle to rest before continuing.

OH # 7 True Concerns vs. Requests for Information

It is important to question through the concern thoroughly in order to determine what (if anything) lies behind it. Some concerns are really requests for information.

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between true concerns and requests for information. You do not need to be certain right away whether a customer remark is a question or concern because you can deal with the remark succesfully in either case by:

- Treating it as a request for information. If it turns out to be a concern, you will recognize this by listening and observing carefully as the customer reacts to your explanation.
- Questioning to clarify the concern and responding to the information given.

Conclusion To STAR Process Section

- *pre-call planning is essential to every successful sales call*
- *there are four phases to the structuredsales call*
- *the four communication skills are essential to all phases of the sales call*
- *it is important that sales reps be able to handle obstacles as they occur.*

*All of these items are covered in great detail during the first two days of the **STAR** course.*

Social Styles Section

Social style knowledge complements the structured sales call components by providing a tool for applying **STAR** in the real world to meet customer needs.

OH # 8 The Social Styles Approach

It is important that a job training sales representatives: (1) be aware of who they are interacting with and (2) how their behavior affects their interactions.

Social Styles knowledge is presented from three perspectives:

(a) behavior - each person has a unique but identifible social style. There are certain things that people say and do that provide you with solid clues as to their style

(b) awareness - when you identify someone's social style you want to be able to relate that knowledge to the typical needs and expectations associated with that style

(c) strategy - once you have an understanding of what another person needs or wants, you can actually plan to meet that person's expectations.

The Golden Rule is to treat others as you would like to be treated the Platinum Rule is to treat others as they *expect* to be treated.

For people who have been through the training the new line in single bars is "what is your social style" -- not what is your horoscope.

OH # 9 Think, Feel, Behave

Social style deals only with behavior. Social styles are concerned only with what we see and hear and not with how a person thinks or feels. We might say that the personality of someone consists of three concentric rings. They represent thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

We can never know for certain what a person is really thinking or feeling. Thoughts and feelings are intangible. They can be concealed, distorted or invented. So probably the best model for understanding our relationship with others is what we perceive about behavior.

Behavior is not a perfect clue, either. A person can act one way and think something exactly opposite. The only advantage behavior has is that we can observe it. Of the three rings, behavior is the best clue we have got to provide us with data for making an accurate judgment about another person. The old proverb is true... *actions do speak louder than words.*

During the STAR workshop all participants receive a Social Styles Profile relative to their own behavior. Using the results of worksheets which individuals have provided to friends, co-workers or acquaintainces before the workshop, Wilson Learning computes a perceived social style. The profile is just a helpful way of indicating an individuals general pattern of behavior as perceived by others.

The Social Style profile results are based on a solid bedrock of data. Over the past 16 years they have completed profiles on over 360,000 managers throughout the world.

Interestingly enough, when people receive their Profiles, 70-80% of them have guessed incorrectly as to their social style. What that says is that most of us do not have a clear picture of how others perceive us.

OH # 10 "Cross" Foil

Social scientists have used all kinds of words to define, classify, measure and describe human behavior.

Although the descriptive names vary according to the research, the two terms that come up most often are *assertiveness* and *responsiveness*.

Assertiveness is defined as the perceived degree to which a person attempts to influence the thoughts and actions of others.

Briefly, we consider a highly assertive person as someone who speaks out, makes strong statements, takes charge, is forward and demanding.

We say that high assertive behavior is characterized by "telling".

We think of people as being low assertive if they are quiet, unassuming, cooperative, good listeners and tend to let others take charge. Low assertive behavior is characterized by an "asking" posture.

Responsiveness is defined as the perceived degree to which a person expresses feelings when relating to others. We think of high-responsive people as individuals who readily show their feelings, emotions and impressions - people who react easily and openly to the influences, appeals and stimulations around them. Responsive people are friendly, enthusiastic and informal.

We characterize this kind of behavior as "emoting".

We think of a low responsive person as someone who is cool, unemotional and businesslike. Low responsive people tend to suppress or restrict any show of emotions. "Controlling" is the term used to describe this kind of behavior.

Explain that a driver is someone who is characterized by telling and controlling their feelings. An expressive is someone who tells and emotes. An amiable is someone who asks and emotes and lastly an analytical is someone who asks and controls.

There are also many combinations of the four social styles.

Examples of each style are:

Driver - Richard Nixon

Nixon was controlled, guarded and felt he had to decide very specifically what other people needed to know.

Expressive - J.F. Kennedy

Kennedy was outgoing, compassionate, warm and emotive. He smiled a lot and freely used gestures to communicate his messages.

Amiable - Bill Cosby

Cosby is friendly, warm and easily includes others. He asks rather than tells people what to do.

Analytical - Abraham Lincoln

Lincoln was concise, technical and very controlled. His Gettysburg address was only 70 words long.

If we accept the premise that there are differences in social styles, then it follows that we need to be able to adapt our sales approach to meet the needs of the differennt styles.

OH # 11 Assumptions About Versatility

The execution of adapting our social style requires certain skills. The most important of these are the skills of versatility.

Versatility is defined as the perceived degree to which a person helps others feel comfortable.

There is an important diffence between versatility and social style. Social Style is fairly stable. Versatility can change. No single style is likely to be more or less versatile than another. A person can become more versatile by improving his or her versatility skills. It is also worth noting that it is possible to become less versatile.

Participants in the ***STAR*** workshop also receive a computer-generated versatility index.

Conclusion

The answers to the quiz will conclude this presentation.

Question 1: False
The STAR process does not call for "closing sales" because "closing" emphasizes the sales rep rather than the customer. Instead, sales reps and employers should construct an agreement together. A successful sales call is one in which progress is made toward achieving the goal of an agreement.

Question 2: False

If a customer raises an obstacle, it generally indicates that the customer is interested enough to consider the potential problems associated with what the sales rep is offering.

Question 3: False

Research and experience in the private sector has shown repeatedly that selling skills can be learned by people with all different kinds of personalities.

Question 4: False.

A good salesperson must have excellent listening skills so he or she can really understand what a customer needs. In many ways, listening skills are more important than talking skills.

Question 5: False

Customers buy because they can see that a particular product or service will meet their needs.

Question 6: False

Customers respond well to all different social styles if they are treated as they "expect to be treated."

Question 7: True

A successful sales call requires extensive preparation.

Question 8: True

Often customers will communicate more with "body language" and the information they omit than they do with what they actually said.

Question 9: False

The same basic skills are used whether you are selling computers or job training services.

Question 10: False

Good sales representatives are customer-oriented not product-oriented. The most successful sales representatives take the time to understand their customers needs and then explain how their offerings can meet those needs.

* SALES TECHNIQUES AND RESULTS *
QUIZ

		T	F
1.	If you do not "close the sale," the call has not been successful.	___	___
2.	If the customer raises an objection or obstacle, he is not likely to buy.	___	___
3.	Good sales people are born and not made.	___	___
4.	Good sales people talk better than they listen.	___	___
5.	Customers buy because of product superiority.	___	___
6.	Customers respond best to an assertive sales style.	___	___
7.	Most of the work of a sales call takes place before the sales call.	___	___
8.	What the customer does not say may be more important than what he does say.	___	___
9.	Selling employment and training services is not like selling computers.	___	___
10.	Good sales representatives are product-oriented rather than customer oriented.	___	___